"To promote understanding and appreciation of the religious and spiritual values which abide in the processes and relationships of agriculture and rural life; to define their significance and relate them to the Christian enterprise at home and abroad."

The Christian Rural Fellowship Bulletin

HOLBROOK LIBRARY PACIFIC SCHOOL OF RELIGION

Published by The Christian Rural Fellowship, Room 1111, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Number 35 October, 1938

The Significance of Land in the Old Testament

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The land in which a people lives and the geographical and climatic conditions under which it develops affect its character and history in a significant manner. What the body is to the mental and spiritual nature of a man that the land is to its inhabitants. Its influence on them cannot easily be over-estimated. It moulds them slowly but surely, both physically, their body, skull, and physiognomy, and mentally, their habits of life, thought, and speech. The mountaineer differs from the dweller of the plain; the nomad of the wilderness from the tiller of the fertile field; the northerner from the southerner; the man of the temperate zone from the one of the other zones. There is a mysterious but real connection between the land and its people which goes so far that one is startled by the observation of what seems almost like a general rule that descendants of men uprooted from their native soil rarely attain true greatness, and, if they do, usually not until they are deeply and firmly rooted in the soil of their new country. This is illustrated in a striking fashion by that amazing little country, Palestine, the home of the Hebrew religion, the cradle of Christianity, and Islam's most sacred place next to Mecca. That land puts its stamp on religion; and religion in turn put its stamp on the land, so that now the adherents of three great religions call it "the Holy Land."

One of the most important factors which determined to a large extent the entire history of the country is its

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

between the Mediterranean and the Syrian and Arabian desert. It formed the natural bridge between Asia and Africa, and thus between the two centres of empire and of civilization.

The commercial importance of this location is at once apparent. The great caravan routes passed through it, connecting Egypt and Arabia with Syria, Asia Minor, Assyria and Babylonia.

Its military and political importance was equally great. It was important for Egypt to make its trade routes safe; it was important for Assyria and Babylonia for imperial and commercial reasons to possess the Phenician coast and the Palestinian hinterland. Thus Palestine was the bone of contention between the two sets of powers. For Palestine independence was possible only when the two sets of powers were in decline. In war Palestine was a buffer state for Egypt. As a consequence there were always two parties, a pro-Egyptian and a pro-Assyrian or a pro-Babylonian, as the case may be.

The cultural importance of the geographic location was of the highest significance. The influences of both centres of civilization played upon its people; not only technical and material or scientific but moral and spiritual influences, jurisprudence and religion. Palestine lay not away from, but on, the highway of ancient civilization. Merchants passed through it with their caravans, they sold and bought, imported and exported; entered into communication with the people, told tales, legends and myths; soldiers came, fought and sometimes stayed in garrisons; governors and administrators brought their scribes with their learning, and their judges with their laws.

THE SIZE OF THIS LAND

is surprisingly small. Western Palestine is only 6,040 square miles in area. East of the Jordan only 3,800 square miles, altogether less than 10,000 square miles. From Dan to Beersheba it is about 140 miles; from Lebanon to

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the southern end of the Dead Sea about 160 miles; from the Jordan to the Sea at its widest section about 50 miles; from Jerusalem to Samaria about 40 miles.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE LAND

is determined by two mountain ranges running parallel from North to South, continuing the Lebanon and Antilebanon (Mt. Hermon) ranges southwards. The Lebanon reaches its highest altitude (6,070 feet) before entering Palestine, while the always snow-covered Hermon towers 9,383 feet high. The Lebanon range sinks down to the lower hills of Galilee (Mt. Tabor) and further to the Plain of Esdraelon, then rises again to 2-3000 feet (Mt. Gilboa, Carmel, Ebal, and Gerizim) until it falls off slowly into the Negeb and ends near Sinai. The Hermon range sinks down to the high table land East of the Jordan with an average height of 2,500 feet, then continues to the South into Mt. Seir.

Between the two mountain ranges is the Jordan valley. The Jordan issues from Antilebanon. It is still 7 feet above the level of the Mediterranean sea at Lake Huleh, but already 682 feet below sea level at the Lake of Galilee, and is at least 1,292 feet below the Mediterranean at the Dead Sea, whose bottom is about 2,600 feet below the level of the Mediterranean, the lowest spot on earth. The valley rises again to nearly 300 feet above sea level, as it continues southward, and then slowly sinks again to the Gulf of Akabah.

Of the two important lakes the Lake of Galilee is about 13 miles long, surrounded by lovely scenery, a lake of life and beauty. The Dead Sea is about 50 miles long, with no life in it or its immediate surroundings, if a few oases are excepted.

In the East Jordan territory there are three rivers. Two flow into the Jordan: the Yarmuk, just south of the Lake of Galilee, and the Jabbok, well-known from Jacob's struggle, about 25 miles north of the Dead Sea. The third, the Arnon, flows into the Dead Sea at about the middle of its eastern shore.

In the western part only one river plays a role in the Old Testament, the Kishon in the Plain of Esdraelon which flows into the Mediterranean Sea north of the promontory of Carmel. The Auja river in the maritime plain is not mentioned in the Old Testament.

The Maritime Plain which flanks the whole country on the west side has no good natural sea ports so that the land was cut off from maritime development. But the sea is nevertheless of the greatest importance for the country, for it is due to it and to the physical formation of the land with its two high mountain ranges that Palestine is not like the desert to the east of it. For the moisture brought by the west wind from the sea is retained by the mountains, and the life of the whole country is affected most happily thereby. It is utterly dependent on rain. Irrigation was impossible. If the rains failed, suffering was inevitable. The presence of the sea on the one side and the close vicinity of the desert on the other determined to a large extent

THE CLIMATE OF THE COUNTRY

which is one of the most potent influences on its inhabitants. It affects not only their physical and mental, but also the social and economic, as well as the cultural and spiritual life. In accordance with the different altitudes, there are three different climates in Palestine. In the maritime plain the temperature is higher than in the mountains, it is moderate on the mountains and tropical in the Jordan valley.

THE VEGETATION

differs correspondingly. There is a tropical vegetation in the Jordan valley with date palms at Jericho, an oriental vegetation of the steppes, especially on Mt. Judah with its pasture land, and the Mediterranean flora in the maritime and the other plains and in the lower hill country. Grapes, olives, figs and pomegranates; wheat, barley, lentils and other cereals are the products of the land. Cedars, cypresses, oaks, terebinths sycamores, acacias and poplars grow in different parts. In ancient times the country must have been more wooded than it is now. The East Jordan country and the plains are fertile, but the rest of the country is poor, the mountains are rough and not fertile, many of them are "bare heights."

THE CHARACTER OF THE LAND,

as a whole, is poor. Palestine is rich in stone, but poor in metals and minerals. They are to be found in the peninsula of Sinai, in Edom, the Negeb and the Lebanon. It was not a land of tradesmen and craftsmen, of industry or art, but of tillers of the soil, of shepherds and cattlemen. It was a land that needed cultivation, required hard work "in the sweat of the brow," especially in the mountainous sections, where the fertile earth was swept away by the winter rains, and terracing was necessary, besides the fencing and walling in for protection. The resultant influence on the character of the population was inevitable. They were hardy, vigorous, and frugal people.

The broken character of the land made communication between the different sections rather difficult, though there were, of course, great trade routes connecting the East Jordan with the West Jordan land and the North with the South. Still this intercourse between the single sections was not easy and this militated strongly against the growth of normal unity and solidarity. It favored the tribal character of its inhabitants. The Jordan has several fords, but as a whole it rather separates than unites the East and West. The same may be said of the Jordan valley except in its part directly south of the Lake of Galilee.

THE POPULATION OF THE LAND

when Israel invaded it, was not a homogeneous nation but was made up of a number of tribes, not even all of them of the Semitic race. The various tribes are referred to, e.g., in Judges 33 as Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites, and Philistines. For us the important consideration in this connection is not their ethnic connection but their social and economic order: they were settled agriculturists with fields and vineyards and olive yards, and with sheep and cattle; they were not nomads or semi-nomads but settled people, with private property of land and herd and flock. They lived in villages and towns and had fortified places; they had a somewhat advanced social and political organization, not only with elders but with kings—city kings—not tribal kings or national; there was no united nation, (cf. Amarna letters); they had their law codes and their law courts, for they had been influenced by their various conquerors: Babylonians, Assyrians, Hittites, Egyptians; they had a commercial civilization; they were traders—with a monetary system, they had a military equipment with chariots of iron similar to their overlords, and they had their own culture and religion and ethics. They were thus far in advance of the invading Hebrews, although their civilization and culture was by no means on the low stage of primitive people.

ISRAEL'S OCCUPATION OF THE LAND

was due to its desire for permanent settlement. It was not conquered all at once but as the result of a long process of invasion and assimilation. The religious sanction for their possession of this land they found later. Then they declared that Yahweh had given it to them, that he had dispossessed the earlier inhabitants. Indeed, he had promised it to their ancestors who had been there long ago, had bought burial places and buried their dead in this land. It is a wonderful story that they tell, full of religious feeling and conviction.

THE EFFECT OF THE LAND ON ISRAEL

was profound. The Hebrews had been semi-nomads before the invasion. Now they came into a land of agriculture and must adjust themselves to these new conditions. They did not give up their pastoral culture; on the contrary, they enlarged it. The Old Testament gives immense figures of flocks. Nabal had 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats. Israel took on a single day 675,000 sheep from the Midianites. Moab's yearly tribute consisted of 120,000 lambs and 120,000 rams. Oxen and cows were added in the farming sections. But now agriculture and viticulture had to be learned. And the Canaanites became Israel's teachers. They learned well, they became good farmers. Solomon gave to Hiram King of Tyre yearly 220,000 bushels of wheat and 170,000 (so the Greek-text) gallons of pure olive oil.

On the religion of Israel the effect of the new environment was equally profound. Religion is always influenced by the character of the land, for the two belong together. Canaan depended absolutely on rain, and

its god was the giver of rain and fertility. The Canaanites worshipped therefore as the god of fertility Baal, the Lord and owner of the land, who had as his consort a female deity Asherah. Tribute was paid to him of all the produce of the field and of the offspring of the domestic animals. At their great religious festivals which were agricultural, the Canaanites sought to express the organic connection of human life with the natural growth and maturing of plant and animal life, and with the Lord of life himself, Baal. Thus on the festival of unleavened bread, when the new crop of barley was harvested, they brought a sheep with the first fruits to Baal (Lev. 23) in recognition of his ownership of all, whereupon the new harvest was released for ordinary use. Again, at the feast of weeks the first loaves of bread of new wheat were brought and the meal eaten in the presence of their god in gratitude and joy (Deut. 16^{6ff}). Thus tribute to Baal and communion with him in the meal found their expression. Similarly at the greatest and most important harvest festival, the festival of booths or tabernacles, tribute of the vintage and fruit harvest was brought, not only tithes, but also votive offerings. All these festivals were taken over by the Israelites and soon associated with their God Yahweh. He became their Baal, the owner of the land and the giver of fertility. They retained, of course, their pastoral festivals, especially the Passover, where the firstlings of the flocks were offered to Yahweh. The Passover was combined with the festival of unleavened bread. It is interesting to note how Yahweh is now regarded as the teacher of agriculture (cf. Isaiah 28). It was he who prepared the fields for the harvest—"Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it, Thou greatly enrichest it; The river of God is full of water: Thou providest them grain, when thou hast so prepared the earth. Thou waterest its furrows abundantly; Thou settlest the ridges thereof: Thou makest it soft with showers; Thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; And thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness; And the hills are girded with joy. The pastures are clothed with flocks; The valleys also are covered over with grain; They shout for joy, they also sing" (Ps. 65). It was he who gave all the increase of the field and of the flock and the herd. This was a decided gain for Israel. The life of the peasant depended on the divine blessing. Only as the Lord and owner of the land blesses, can it yield abundance. The sense of dependence on God is strong in the farmer. Israel learned this quickly—". . . but the land, whither ye go over to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven, a land which Jehovah thy God careth for: the eyes of Jehovah thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year. And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love Jehovah your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give the rain of your land in its season, the former rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy grain, and thy new wine, and thine oil. And I will give grass in thy fields for thy cattle, and thou shalt eat and be full" (Deut. $11^{11\text{-}15}$).

But there also lurked a danger in this new conception of God. The emphasis on nature led to the adoption of nature cults, which was disastrous for they were utterly opposed to the stern moral nature of Yahweh. The Canaanites believed in this deification of the forces of nature with the deity. Their desire for union with the deity of deities in the natural processes had led inevitably to magic practices such as the pouring out of water in order to get rain, or to mystic union, sought by the imitation of the process of the fertilization of nature (the divine wedding) at the sanctuary with the sacred prostitutes, male and female, in order to strengthen thereby the natural forces. The end sought was fertility. Israel felt the strong force of this nature cult and might have utterly succumbed, had not her leaders fought against it with inflexible determination. They re-interpreted the nature festivals by making them memorials of historic events. It is as memorials of God's great deliverance at the Exodus that they are to be celebrated. They showed the people that the sacred places were really places where Yahweh had revealed himself to their ancestors and had nothing to do with Baal. The land was His land, it was His home. Indeed, Yahweh was their Baal, their over-Lord. The longer Israel lived in the land the more it became its own home land. And it was then that they told of God's promise to their forefathers that He would give them the land. An intense attachment to the land resulted. They loved it, they glorified in it, and spoke of it as a land flowing with milk and honey (Deut. $8^{7ff}11^{9}$). They were ready to die for it. They felt close to the soil. Israel's language is full of pictures taken from the land, its agricultural and pastoral life, its flowers and trees, its animals and birds. When later they were carried away to the plains of Babylonia they were full of longing for the mountains and hills and valleys of their home land, as we see from the prophecies of Ezekiel. It was Yahweh's land which he had blessed with his own blessing. To be separated from it was an incredible hardship.

was recognized by historians, prophets, and law givers. The Israelites and Jews were farmers and shepherds, people of the soil as long as they were in Palestine. As a people they became merchants and traders much later, indeed not until they had lost their home land and were scattered among the nations. In one of the latest prophetic passages the trader is still called the Canaanite (Zech. 14^{21}). The fundamental principle of Israel in regard to the land and its ownership was that God, Yahweh, was the owner, the lord of the land, it belonged to him. He had given it to his people and distributed it to the various tribes, but it still belonged to him. That it was the tribe that became the human possessor and that the land with its springs and pastures, was at first common property as in the nomadic civilization, is clear. But in the course of time, probably under Canaanite influence, portions of fields were assigned by the sacred lot to individual families and the older practice of tribal or communal ownership was abolished. The alleged traces of the periodical assignment of common lands by lot to the inhabitants (Jer. 37^{12}, Mic. 2^{6}, Ps. 16^{5}, Prov. 1^{14}) are all uncertain. Ezekiel, however, in his program of a new constitution provides for public pasture lands belonging to the city of Jerusalem as a whole.

How tenaciously the family property was kept in the family is not only seen in Naboth's refusal of King Ahab's advantageous offer for his vineyard (I Kgs. 21) but also in the law of the inheritance (Num. 27^{1-11}), in the stipulation that daughters who inherit in the absence of sons must marry within the family of their father's tribe (Num. 36^{1-12}); in the right and duty of the goël or next of kin to redeem property that had been sold or was in danger of being sold to strangers (Jer. 32^{6-11}); and most especially in the law of the year of Jubilee when every piece of land which had been sold must be returned to the original owner. All this was in the interest of the people, for all of them should own land.

How strenuously encroachments on the possession of the land were resisted is seen as far as the kings were concerned, in the remarkable tale of Naboth and his vineyard (I Kgs. 21); in the opposition to the practice of the kings, outlined in I Samuel 8^{14}, of taking away property from their subjects and giving it to their favorites (cf. also I Sam. 22^{7}); in Ezekiel's careful provision that the king shall not be permitted to take away land from his people, and that if he wants to reward his servants he may give them parts of his own property, but these grants are to be only for the life time of the incumbent (Ezek. 45^{8}). The violent protests of the prophets, especially of Isaiah ($5^{6ff.}$) and Micah ($2^{1ff.}$) against the encroachments of the rich and the beginning land monopoly shows that they regarded this as one of the gravest dangers to the national welfare. The opposition to the owning of property by the priests in Deuteronomy 12^{12}, 14^{29}, 18^{1} shows this, too. One has but to think of the vast holdings of landed property by the temples in Egypt, which must have been well known to the lawgivers, to perceive how dangerous from a national and religious point of view this was. The provision of Deuteronomy appears, however, to have been too drastic. The priests had owned private property before (cf. Jer. 32), and could probably not be dispossessed so easily, so Ezekiel (45^{1-16}, 48^{9-13}) and the Priest Code (Nu. 35, Josh. 21) assign portions to them for dwelling, in order to regulate the extent of their possessions, and Lev. $27^{16ff.}$ orders that a field which had been devoted to Yahweh and not been redeemed shall belong to the priest.

CONCERN FOR THE LAND, ITSELF,

the soil, and its continuing fertility, is evidenced by the law of the Sabbath year. Every seventh year the fields must lie fallow (Exod. 23^{11}, Lev. 25^{1-7}), and also every fiftieth year, the so-called year of Jubilee (Lev. 25^{11f}). Whether the latter was actually observed is uncertain, but in any event it showed the deep interest of the priestly law-giver in the continuing fertility of the soil. He anchors his demands in religion for he believes that the long exile was a punishment for Israel's failure to observe the law of the Sabbath year and declares that during the exile the land shall lie desolate and "rest and enjoy the rest which it has not in your Sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it" (Lev. 26^{35}).

There was an exceedingly close relation between the land and the people. What concerned the one affected the other, too. The people suffered from drought or other visitations which afflicted the land, and the land in turn suffered from the behavior of the people. It cannot bear the revolutionary words of Amos—"Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to Jeroboam, king of Israel, saying: Amos hath conspired against thee in the

midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words" (Amos 7^{10}); it is defiled by the sins of the people—"And I brought you into a plentiful land, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination" (Jer. 2^{7}); (cf. also Lev. 19^{29}, Num. $35^{33f.}$, Jer. $3^{2.9}$); it mourns because of them and withers away—"How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of the whole country wither? for the wickedness of them that dwell therein, the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our latter end" (Jer. 12^{4}); and must be cleansed, else it will spew the people out—". . . that the land vomit not you out also, when ye defile it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you" (Lev. 18^{28}); (cf. also Lev. 20^{22}). The fields are animate, they cry out against their owner if he does not treat them properly—"If my land crieth out against me, And the furrows thereof weep together; If I have eaten the fruits thereof without money, Or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life: Let thistles grow instead of wheat, And cockle instead of barley" (Job. 31^{38-40}); they suffer, lose their strength and vitality and cannot bring forth fruit. The life and fate of the land are so bound up with the life and fate of the people that Yahweh in blessing the people for their obedience blesses the land also with great fertility—"If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give you rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time; and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will cause evil beasts to cease out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land," etc. (Lev. 26^{3ff}); and in punishing the people for their disobedience, afflicts the land also with barrenness—"I also will do this unto you: I will appoint terror over you, even consumption and fever, that shall consume the eyes, and make the soul to pine away; and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. . . . And I will break the pride of your power: and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass; and your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruit" (Lev. $26^{16, 19, 20}$).

When the great catastrophe came and the people were carried away into exile, the land was desolate and deserted like a widow whose children had gone into foreign countries pining for their return. The people on their part felt an intense longing to go home—"By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept, When we remembered Zion. Upon the willows in the midst thereof We hanged up our harps. For there they that led us captive required of us songs, and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing Jehovah's song in a foreign land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, Let my right hand forget her skill. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, If I remember thee not; If I prefer not Jerusalem Above my chief joy" (Ps. 137^{1-6}). (cf. also Jer. $31^{23f.}$) Deportation was a most awful experience for them. It meant a fearful spiritual loss, it meant being away from Yahweh's land, inability to render worship to him, for their religion was bound to the land, their cult to the temple at Jerusalem, the foreign country was unclean, the foreign people were unclean, their very food unclean. When they now hoped for a brighter future it was not only for the return to the homeland but also for the return to the beloved soil, which will be marvelously fertile and to be enjoyed by them forever—"Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring back the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, saith Jehovah thy God" (Amos 9^{13-15}). They hoped for the time when every man shall sit under his vine and fig tree and none shall make them afraid (Mic. 4^{4}), when peace will reign in nature and the wild beasts be tame and do no more damage—"And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11^{6-9}); and the golden age of the past, the garden of Eden, shall come back in the golden age of the future. Always their hopes were bound up with the land in which their very soul abode.

WHEN WE TAKE ALL THIS INTO ACCOUNT IT IS EASY TO SEE THAT THE VALUE OF A PERMANENT HOME LAND

on their own soil for the people of Israel in Old Testament times cannot be over-estimated. It was providential, as they themselves also felt and knew, that they should have possessed this particular land on the highway of civilization. How much the course of her history and of her religion might have been changed if they had settled in some other land or if they had continued in their semi-nomadic state in the wilderness without a permanent land of their own. Would and could they have had the experience that made them so significant for the world? It was, as we have seen, while they were farmers and shepherds, not merchants and traders, that they made their greatest contributions to religion and ethics. They made them only as long as they were on their own home soil. Even the apparent exceptions, the prophets Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah, prove the rule, for they were living with their souls in Palestine even though their bodies were in exile, and the whole power of the message is rooted in Palestinian, not in Babylonian, soil.

It is a sobering thought to contemplate the extreme danger to religion that lay in the loss of the home land. The ten tribes were scattered and—lost. If the Jews also had thus been scattered without ever having an opportunity of coming back to their own land, would not their precious heritage have been dissipated? Only as long as they were in Palestine did they make those great contributions that have given us our prophetic and Christian religion. Jesus also lived, worked, and died in his home land, close to the soil: Israel's greatest son, God's highest gift to them and through them to the world.

For well nigh two thousand years the hand of God lies heavily upon the people and the land. Scattered among the nations, away from their home land, everywhere disliked, hated, or despised—persecuted and driven out, nowhere entirely at home, nowhere loved, at most but tolerated, this unhappy people has found no rest, and wherever it is, it communicates this restlessness to its neighbors. Is there no hope for it? Does the promise of Palestine as the home land of the Jews mean the dawn of a new day for them? Do they hear in it God's call to repentance voiced so long ago by Jeremiah, "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith Jehovah, I will not look in anger upon you; for I am merciful, saith Jehovah, I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against Jehovah thy God" (Jer. $3^{12f.}$). Is Jeremiah's hope to come true? "The people that were left of the sword have found favor in the wilderness; even Israel goes to his rest. The Lord appeared from afar unto him, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. $31^{2f.}$). Will they hear? Will they return to the Lord? Will they be healed? Only God knows. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11^{33-36}).

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